Volume 22, No. 17 • June 26, 2015

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New campaign launched

Covering up for criminals
Bishop Horden residential school survivors sue the federal government

Howie Miller stands up
Attacking racism with laughter

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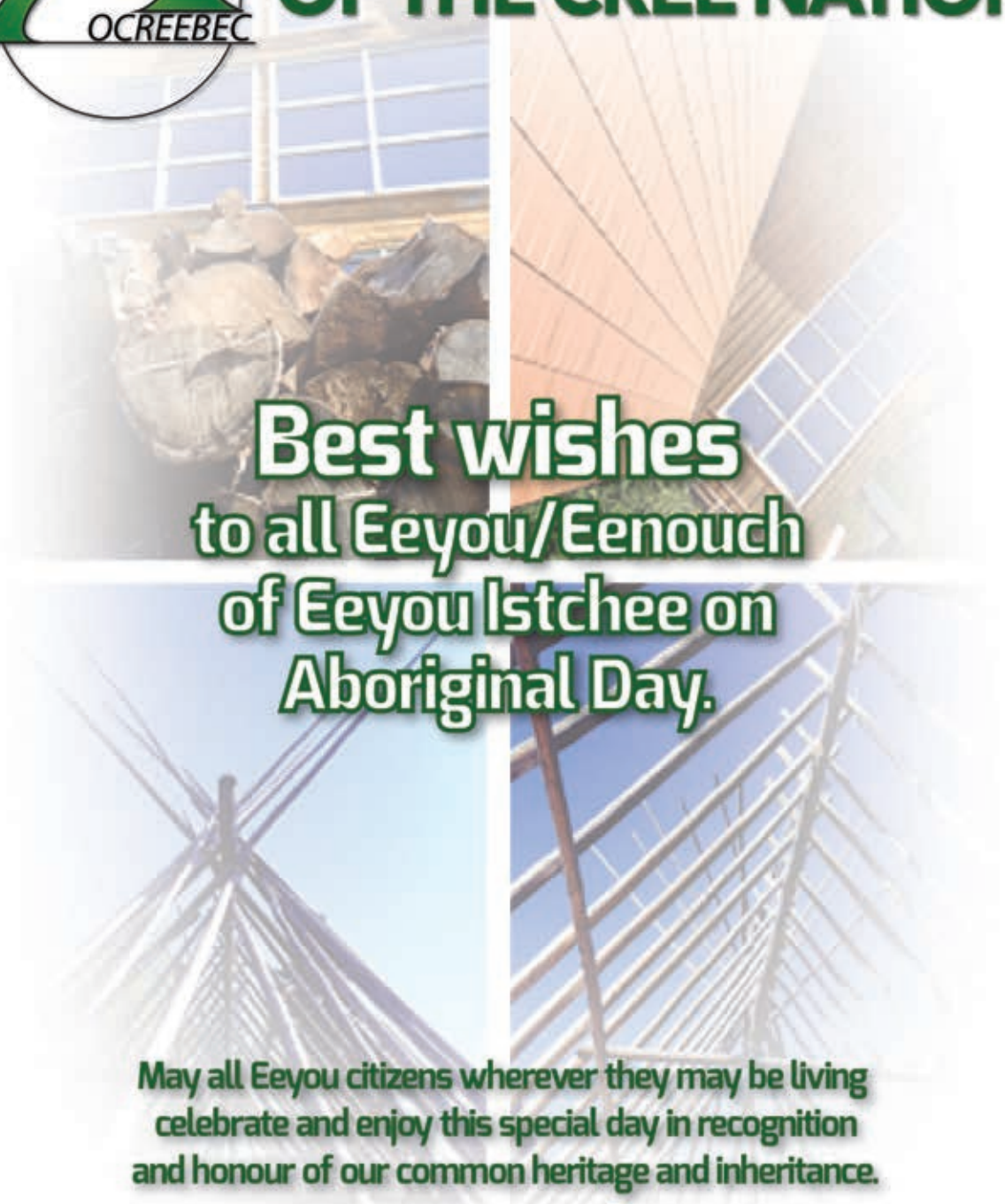

Best wishes
to all Eeyou/Eenouch of Eeyou Istchee on Aboriginal Day.

May all Eeyou citizens wherever they may be living celebrate and enjoy this special day in recognition and honour of our common heritage and inheritance.

MoCreebec has come a long way since the association was established back in 1980. MoCreebec offers a variety of programs and services designed to serve the MoCreebec community, in areas such as health, housing, employment, education, and communication.

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Hope

by Will Nicholls

I remember hope and what it means. I had such great hopes when the report by the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples came out in 1996. I had such hope when the Kelowna Accord was produced in 2005. I still have such hope that the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) will mean change for the future of Aboriginal peoples in Canada. But do I expect my hopes to achieve reality or see action that will have a meaningful result?

Unfortunately, the past tells me what I hope for is not what usually happens. And in truth I think humankind is somehow diminished by that. We all grow up with stories of the hero or heroine who wins all while showing the best we can be. It is not only in Cree culture, but in every culture or people living in this world. I see my son, Hunter, laugh and feel something special when a character in his favourite shows overcomes challenges.

All these things teach values everyone agrees with and tries to pass on. Because of this the question arises why do we see actions in this world that do not live up to those lessons? Why are their people like Hitler, Stalin and others who have tossed aside those values? Why are those who make money off the suffering of others? Why can some people or governments (i.e. the people by the people) not live up to the standards we try to install in our youth?

It seems hope is something for the movies and reality has got a bad reputation. A nice guy is not always something positive and to be taken advantage of. A trustworthy politician is not the norm and that's what we expect rather than fight to change that. Dreams of making things better are usually crushed rather than nurtured.

The 90 plus recommendations of the TRC are a dream, not a great dream but still one nevertheless, that cost Canadian taxpayers over $12 million. It would be a waste and shameful to see the conclusions and recommendations become nothing more than a just a dream.

One must give Harper's administration credit though for the TRC and the hope it brought to residential-school survivors. For many survivors simply being able to tell their stories was something that was unheard of in the past. For others, it was a sign that Canada was finally willing to come to grips with the legacy of the residential-school system imposed upon Aboriginal peoples.

It was also a brilliant political move on the part of the Conservatives. If they lose the next election and the recommendations aren't carried out they have plenty of ammunition against their successors. If the recommendations are carried out they can claim credit for the results. If they win then they can implement the recommendations in a timely fashion and call some of their ideas aspirational..

Still there is a tiny flame of hope that the dark chapter of Canada's history involving the residential-school system can finally be laid to rest. Sometimes all you have is hope and that is what sustains us all.

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August 2014 canoe expedition on the Broadback river.

photo by
Jonathan Elkhoury (Cree Nation Government, environmental department)

Celebrations

by Joshua Iserhoff

I think I heard "angels of the James Bay Highway" shout for joy when my namesake Josh at Cree Radio Network interviewed our Grand Chief regarding the $97,500,000 to redo the infamous JBH over the next five years. I have shared my concerns many times over the state of this highway. Thank goodness for Couillard's Plan Nord and our CNG team.

"We" have successfully negotiated on this multi-million dollar deal. Am I happy? You bet! We now can purchase Porsches and glide blissfully into the northern skies of Eeyou Istchee without blowouts and leaps. You have exactly five years to save up cash and buy your dream car.

Since construction will not be without its frustrations, I urge you first to be thankful and also to leave your town early as you may encounter a few long delays. I hope they hire my good friend Martha Napton as a flag woman. Always nice to see her smiling and telling me, "beh'gatch bim'bwee!" I am actually excited about this project and I am sure that there will be great opportunities for our people. Get cracking!

By the time you read this I will be dancing somewhere to the beat of a powwow drum, but deep down I secretly wish for fiddle music instead. I'll be celebrating my First Nation-hood along with my people across Canada. I am proud to be First Nations. I've walked into halls where racism was peoples' friend. I've seen and heard much of everything. June 21 is Canada's recognition for Aboriginal Peoples Day.

To us Eeyouch, Aboriginal Day is every day. I will continue to thrive as a First Nations man to become the best that I can be and show mankind that it not my feathers that will make me noble but simply being human will. One more thing: smoke signals are always thicker on that day so you'll have to be patient to get your message.

June 24, I'll be celebrating the birth of Saint John the Baptist (not the beheading, thank you) with my fellow melting-pot Quebecers. Usually Nemaska is very quiet on that day except for Camp Nemiscau where it tends to be not so quiet. I usually celebrate a good hour with Céline, Mitsou, Ginette Reno, Roch Voisine and Arcade Fire at home. That's a playlist actually.

However, I hope to experience La Fête Nationale in Rimouski. I heard it was the place to be, though I'll start with Chibougamau this year. I hope to see Mayor Cyr and dance the night away to Gerry Boulet's "Toujours vivant" – my old teacher Daniel Lefebvre from the 1990s was an enthusiast and had us, Nemaska 1995 grads, learn many Québécois songs. "Provocante tu fais exprès" de Marjo – OMG don't get me started. I think I plan to celebrate Quebec style – I wonder where Muguette will be?

In the end, we celebrate our culture, share our culture and we hope to continue to educate people of our rich history. We are First Peoples, we are blessed and let us always give thanks to our Creator. Happy Aboriginal Day!

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Three-way pact for sustainable development

Oujé-Bougoumou signs agreements with Chibougamau and Chapais

by Joshua Grant

Chief Reggie Neeposh and the Nation of Oujé-Bougoumou took another step forward in affirming the role of Eeyou Istchee as stewards of the land and protectors of the environment on June 15. Neeposh signed memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with Mayors Manon Cyr of Chibougamau and Steve Gamache from Chapais, marking a two-fold agreement between the three communities and plans for future collaboration in sustainability and economic development.

Chibougamau has committed to take action to mitigate the contamination caused by the now-abandoned Principale mine, while Chapais has agreed to team up with Oujé-Bougoumou to coordinate potential future energy developments taking place on Cree land. The two agreements aim to be mutually beneficial, creating jobs for local residents and focusing on long-term sustainability for the entire region.

In his address at the signing, Neeposh stated that these MOUs are a natural continuation of the Governance Agreement, provincial legislation established two years ago between the Cree Nation and Quebec that created the Eeyou Istchee/James Bay Regional Government and extended the authority of the Cree Nation Government over its traditional lands.

"This landmark innovation created a very new and far-sighted relationship among all residents of the territory which was based on mutual respect and recognition of mutual interests and common concerns," Neeposh declared. "The Memorandums of Understanding that we are signing today are a reflection of the hard work and the good intentions of the communities in this region to give life to our new Regional Government and to demonstrate its fundamental wisdom. These are the vehicles through which our communities will collaborate on various development projects within our region."

Neeposh cited the heavy metal contamination in Doré Lake as a serious environmental concern, one that the Cree of Oujé-Bougoumou have long fought to remedy. He described the lake as a source of sustenance for the community and said his people are pleased to see that their efforts to bring attention to the contamination have resulted in a restoration plan. He also mentioned that Oujé-Bougoumou looks forward to collaborating with the people of Chibougamau.

Oujé-Bougoumou's agreement with Chapais will fund feasibility studies to determine the viability of a number of potential development projects linked to energy production at the Chapais cogeneration plant. Should any of these projects prove to be worth pursuing, they will be undertaken as joint ventures.

Neeposh told *the Nation* that he was pleased with the meetings and the agreements. He noted that this is something envisioned by his community for many years and that the MOUs assert the Cree Nation's role in maintaining and preserving the land of northern Quebec.

"The towns know that we're not going away, we've always been here and we always will be. It's also sending a message to Quebec, letting them know that they need to respect our agreements. The municipalities in our region need to know that we're a very cooperative people, there's no need to approach things in a confrontational style. We breathe the same air; we drink the same water. We had some issues we had to deal with and we're happy that we're all sitting at the same table."

Neeposh commended the openness demonstrated by the leaders of Chibougamau and Chapais in his closing remarks at the MOU signing, citing collaboration and communication as the means to establishing better relationships in James Bay territory.

"As a result of an openness on the part of Mayor Cyr and Mayor Gamache to create a new and genuinely respectful relationship we have maintained very open, useful discussions and dialogue on issues that we face in common. These documents take us further along our new journey toward a new future, which we will create together."

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More support for Broadback protection

New campaign launched to show support for Broadback conservation

by Amy German

While the Cree have been hard at work to see the Broadback River and the area surrounding it declared a protected area, a new campaign has been launched by the Quebec chapter of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society (CPAWS).

According to Pier-Olivier Boudreault, a biologist and project manager for conservation and forestry under SNAP Québec (the CPAWS Quebec Chapter), the organization has been involved with the Cree for nearly a decade with this project, helping to map out the region desired project.

While the Cree Nation Government submitted a proposal to Quebec to see the Broadback area protected under the Plan Nord, Boudreault said that with the recent re-launch of the Plan Nord by the Liberal government, now is a good time to express public support for the project in the hopes that it helps to see the project finally realized.

Boudreault said that while the Plan Nord (now the Plan Nord 2) proposes to see about 50% of the region above the 49th parallel recognized as protected, actually only about 20% has been earmarked so far and another 30% is still being discussed. The other region under consideration for conservation is the Kovik River Project in Nunavik.

"The government also had an engagement to create one or two large protected areas with about 10,000 protected square kilometres and right now the only proposal on the table that fits this is the Broadback," stated Boudreault.

"This is why we decided to launch the campaign right now, to show the government that there are people behind it not only from within Cree territory but also Quebec."

What makes this project unique however is that rather than having a form letter that supporters can sign to tell the government that this is what they want to see done, these letters are going to Grand Chief Matthew Coon Come. As Boudreault explained, this is because the Cree already have so much leadership in environmental conservation and have already seen areas protected through Cree leadership.

Within days of launching the campaign, 1768 letters had already been signed and sent. Boudreault is anticipating many more as the Broadback region includes an area that would see woodland caribou habitat safe from development and SNAP Québec's caribou protection project has more than 13,000 supporters.

Tupatukasi Waterfall, Broadback River

In response to the campaign, Coon Come welcomed the letters as the communities of Waswanipi, Oujé-Bougoumou, Mistissini, Waskaganish and Nemaska, who all share the Broadback watershed area, have been asking the Quebec government for years to protect this area from further development.

"Unfortunately the Quebec government has not responded, and it remains open to commercial logging and other forms of industrial development that threaten the Cree way of life in the area," said Coon Come.

"As you know, many environmental groups have had success with campaigns that ask concerned citizens to send letters to government officials, urging them to take action. It had come to my attention that CPAWS, which has worked tirelessly in support of protecting the Broadback area, has developed a new approach to demonstrate to the Quebec government that this area is in need of real protection.

"They are requesting that people send letters to me, expressing their support and encouragement for our efforts to protect this area from mining and forestry development. So far I have received many letters not only from people from Quebec, but also from Texas, California and other countries around the world."

The Grand Chief went on to say that the letters gave him a sense of great encouragement and renewed hope.

For more information:
www.protectthebroadback.org
www.cpaws.org/campaigns/protect-the-broadback-area
http://eeyouconservation.com/broadback-watershed-conservation-plan.html

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Val-d'Or drafts Adam Cheezo

Eeyou Istchee saw one of its talented young athletes selected in the annual Quebec Major Junior Hockey League (QMJHL) draft earlier this month, with 16-year-old forward Adam Cheezo from Eastmain going to the Val-d'Or Foreurs in the third round as the 43rd overall pick. The draft took place at Palais des sports Léopold-Drolet in Sherbrooke and Cheezo was the first eligible player from his former team, the midget AAA Amos Forestiers, to be selected in the draft.

A highly regarded prospect, Cheezo is a tall, strong power forward, who is quick on his skates, passes the puck well and is very talented offensively. He was the Number One scorer for the Forestiers for the season of 2014-2015, tallying 14 goals and 18 assists in 40 games.

Val-d'Or is a natural destination for Cheezo, given his roots in the James Bay area, and QMJHL scouts for the Foreurs told the press that he's the type of player they're looking for and he could earn a spot at the next level as a centre or winger provided he performs well in training camp.

Watch out for a feature on Cheezo and his budding hockey career in the next issue of *the Nation*.

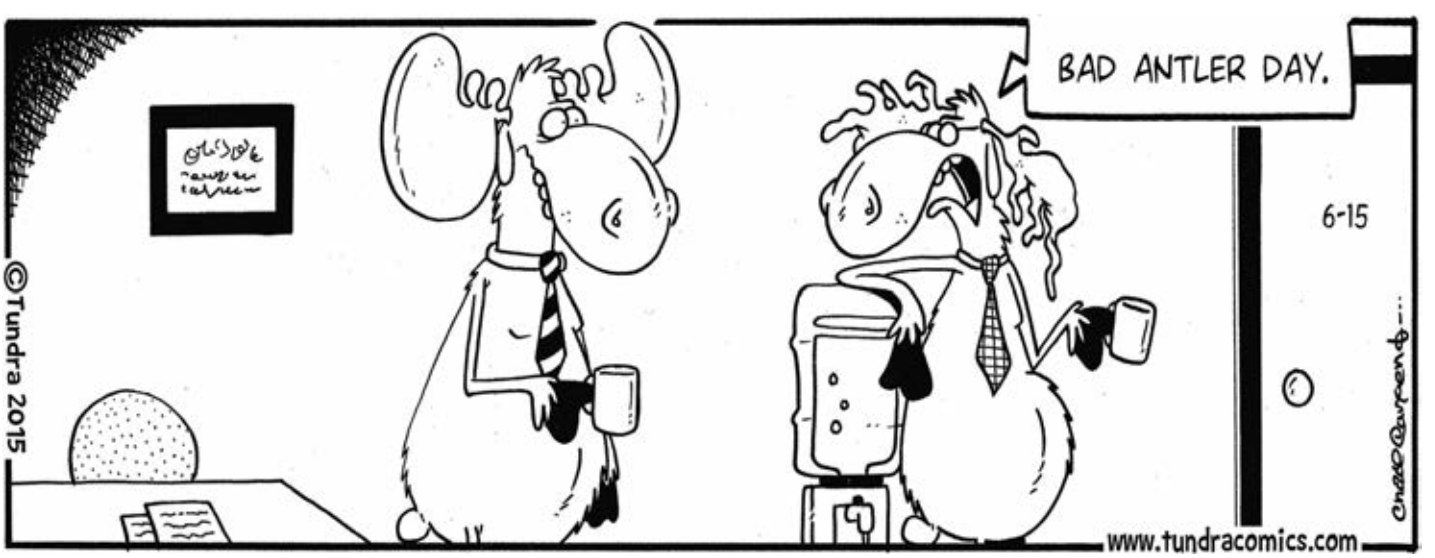
Filmmaker fights for film institute

Native filmmaker and actor Shirley Cheechoo is fighting hard to find the money to keep the Weengushk Film Institute in Manitoulin Island, Ontario alive. She has now turned to online crowdfunding after receiving little response in her appeals to the government and band councils across Canada.

Recognized for her films like *Johnny Tootall* and *Moose River Crossing*, Cheechoo insists that Weengushk is instrumental in not only equipping Aboriginal youth with the skills necessary to make movies but also in providing a means of healing through self-expression and the sharing of personal experiences.

Cheechoo told CBC Aboriginal that she has seen a number of troubled young people turn over a new leaf at her non-profit training school. "While they are making a film, they are learning how to read, write, do math, leadership, how to do their resumes and how to work as a team…so they can move from where they are to a better life, and a better future."

Cheechoo wrote to 600 band councils seeking an annual contribution of $250 but only three responded. While Cheechoo maintains that her school offers more than just a diploma, many bands are not interested in funding an institution that doesn't provide official certification. For now, the founder of the Weengushk Film Institute is depending on online fundraising to offset the costs of rent and electricity at her facility.



Covering up for criminals

Bishop Horden residential school survivors sue the federal government for failing to find documents

by Jesse Staniforth

The nine survivors who launched a lawsuit against the federal government for failing to find information about crimes against children committed at Moose Factory's Bishop Horden Hall residential school could set a precedent for survivors across the country.

Lawyers for the survivors, supported by lawyers from the Assembly of First Nations, launched a suit against the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs in late May, arguing that the federal government did not adequately search for documents that would back up survivor claims that staff were removed or arrested for abusing children at the school. Aboriginal Affairs, for their part, is arguing they did all the work they needed to do by looking the records of Library and Archives Canada as well as their own archives, and that they are not required to open police and court records to look for more information.

Charlie Angus, MP for Timmins-James Bay and the NDP ethics critic, is incensed over the federal government's response.

"In the case of St. Anne's [residential school in Fort Albany], they sat on thousands of pages of police testimony that they had access to, and provided a completely false evidence narrative saying that there was no evidence, there was no history of abuse committed against children at St. Anne's, which was false," he said. A Superior Court judge eventually sided with the St. Anne's survivors.

"In the case of Bishop Horden, it's a little different," Angus continued. "It's not that the federal government had knowledge of documents – it's that they didn't seem to look very hard for documents as part of their end of the legal agreement. I've gotten access to a number of the Library and Archives documents, and they're basically just annual school reports. There's no letters, complaints, nothing like that. So it's not a total picture of what happened there."

Many Bishop Horden survivors recall staff members being removed for misconduct in the 1960s, yet none of the documents that the federal government turned over reflect any record of such events.

"Records should exist," Angus said. "You don't remove staff from an institution under the federal government watch without there being some kind of reports: were the police involved? Was the federal government aware of it? Did the Indian agents have reports? If these people were removed for misconduct against children, there's a paper trail."

Angus says that the Independent Assessment Process (IAP), the legal hearing set up under the Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, is supposed to be, at its root, "non-adversarial." It is intended to give survivors the opportunity to tell their stories in a less confrontational setting than a court challenge.

"What's undermined the IAP from the beginning is that the federal government plays two roles:

Credit- Algoma University Archives

it's the defendant, and it's also legally obligated to provide the documents that serve as the basis to judge the claims by. We're being told again and again this is supposed to be 'non-adversarial.' In the experience of my constituents, it's been anything but that."

Angus emphasized that settlements are based on corroborating the stories survivors tell about abuse. If there's no record to substantiate that such abuse took place, it's far harder for survivors to win large settlement amounts. The federal government is obliged to do all due diligence required to search for and turn over evidence of guilt on its own part.

"If people come forward and are fairly accurate about the general time period, and there are stories that seem to be backed up by a number of claimants that an incident did take place then it's incumbent on the government to seek it out," Angus said. "And they were refusing. And that's the problem here."

This case differs from that of St. Anne's, in which the government had discovered many damning documents but refused to turn them over until they were forced to by the Superior Court.

"In the case of Bishop Horden, they may have gone and searched for documents and not found anything, but when it was brought to their attention in the hearing process [that numerous survivors specifically remembered staff being removed], the reasonable thing would be to say, 'Okay, we'll do another document check. We're either going to find it, or we're not.' But they didn't do the other document check. They refused. So the survivors had to take them to Ontario Superior Court to say that this is not in the spirit of these hearings."

Angus believes the government's behaviour in the Bishop Horden case is consistent with its attitude to dealing with any Native people, "which is to fight them tooth and nail even when you tell them it's going to be a 'non-adversarial' process. They're probably saving the system a lot of money rather than having to face massive class-action lawsuits that they'd be on the hook for. So why not do the right thing?"

Instead, Angus said, the government hasn't even done what it was ordered to do in the St. Anne's case. It finally delivered the documents it had been sitting on, but when it did, the names of perpetrators and witnesses to crimes against children that would corroborate survivor testimony had been blacked out. He also noted that they use the tactic of "document dumps" – holding documents until shortly before the hearing, then handing over thousands of pages of material to lawyers unable to read it all.

"The question," Angus fumed, "is why are they showing such bad faith in a process that they are legally obligated to respect? If this were done in civil court, there would be consequences. Why are there no consequences when it's done in this process?"

"The question is why are they showing such bad faith in a process that they are legally obligated to respect? If this were done in civil court, there would be consequences. Why are there no consequences when it's done in this process?"

Charlie Angus, NDP MP for Timmins-James Bay

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Racism at Ste-Justine?

A Chibougamau mom complains after alleged mistreatment

by Amy German

When Kelly Bosum brought her toddler in for day surgery at Montreal's Ste-Justine children's hospital to have tubes put into his ears, the last thing she expected was to have her Aboriginal heritage insulted. According to Bosum, however, she has since had to file a complaint with the hospital after a June 1 incident left her outraged.

According to Bosum, an Atikamekw woman who lives near Chibougamau, an altercation took place between her and a surgeon after tensions rose stemming from miscommunication between Bosum and the hospital.

Bosum brought her son in for an 8:30 am appointment for surgery but upon arrival was told that not only should she have been there one hour prior to prepare the child for day surgery but also that she should not have given him any food or liquid from midnight onward. Bosum said she was never given any of these instructions.

She said that the surgeon, Dr. Marie-Claude Quintal, reprimanded her for this and said that they would have to negotiate with the anesthesiologist to see if surgery would be possible later on that day and that this would be costly as the time had already been squandered.

The hospital was able to give her son another surgery time later on during the day. Then, after the surgery was completed, she was called into Quintal's office and asked who was footing the bill for her trip to Montreal for her son's surgery.

"I told her that it was the department (ministry) of Aboriginal Affairs, and she said, 'I guess this is what our (*hostie d'impôt*) goddamn tax dollars go towards.' I was so surprised that I just didn't know what to say."

According to Bosum, the surgeon went on to talk about all of the accommodations that had to be made for her child. When Bosum finally did respond, saying that she was proud of her Aboriginal heritage, the situation only escalated.

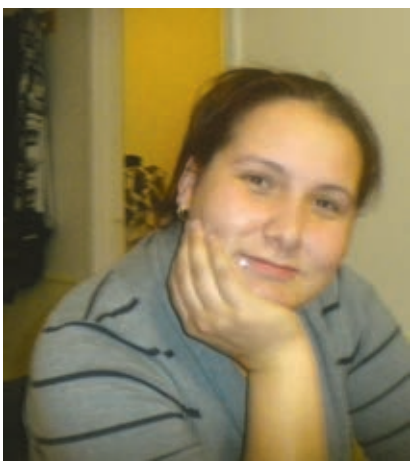
"I told her that she had no business talking to me that way and that I was proud to be Aboriginal and after that she asked me what planet I was living on, and said that we (Indians) should be eliminated a little," said Bosum.

Infuriated, Bosum said she posted about what had transpired on Facebook and it was from there that she heard not only about other stories of other Aboriginal parents having similar experiences at Ste-Justine but was also encouraged by them to file a complaint.

Bosum said that the hospital is investigating her complaint and that they have told her that they will get back to her within 45 days.

Officials at Ste-Justine declined to comment as all ongoing complaint investigations are confidential. However, they may make a public statement when the process is completed, in light of the media attention that this case has garnered.

At the Cree Board of Health and Social Services of James Bay, interim Commissioner of Complaints Louise Valiquette said that anyone who feels that they have been subject to unfair treatment should file a complaint with the institution's individual Commission of Complaints, also known as the ombudsman. And, in instances where they are unsure if an incident qualifies as unfair treatment, she is the person who can guide them through the process.



Kelly Bosum

"There are a lot of situations where this can be done. If you feel that you have been subjected to racism or if you feel that you have been mistreated in any way, or did not receive the services that you were supposed to receive you can file a complaint. And, I can talk to you about what you have experienced to see if there is something that could be done because sometimes it is not evident and so you can call me and I will help," said Valiquette.

For more information:
www.creehealth.org/about-us/users-rights
www.creehealth.org/users-rights/complaints
www.creehealth.org/sites/default/files/complaints-brochure-eng-lo.pdf

Joking power

Cree stand-up comedian Howie Miller uses humour to laugh at racism

by Joel Barde

Howie Miller possesses a devastating, lighting-quick wit. And he uses it to tremendous effect – to explore, expose and finally laugh at some of the racist stereotypes many Canadians associate with First Nations people.

Take for example the opening joke of one of his older sets.

"I love being Native. I love all the free stuff," he declares to the crowd. "The land is free. The Medicare is free. Did you know we even get free cab rides? Yeah – in the back of cop cars."

Miller's birth family is from the Paul Band, a Cree First Nation 70 kilometres west of Edmonton, Alberta. But he was adopted at an early age and raised by a white family in Edmonton, where he continues to live.

Being the only Native in an all-Caucasian family gave him a unique perspective on race from an early age. "This experience gave me an interesting view of life – I saw both ends of the colour spectrum."

In school, Miller was also an anomaly. But that, he says, doesn't mean he felt ostracized because of his race. "The schools I attended were so white that race didn't even seem to matter," he explains. "It was never brought up. I was just Howie. If I did something stupid, people didn't make fun of me because I was Native, they made fun of me because I was Howie. Race didn't really play a factor."

Naturally funny, Miller was a class clown, using his talent for mimicry to make fun of his principal's baritone and pleads to "be reasonable".

"I remember a substitute teacher who said, 'Hey, I've had enough of you.' And I replied, 'No, you have not!'"

After high school, Miller did a series of low-paid, largely ungratifying jobs. He worked at a McDonalds, at a car wash, and fought fires in British Columbia.

They were tough years, and he wasn't merely fending for himself.

"I started having kids when I was 17 – like a good Native boy," he jokes. By 23, he and his wife already had four boys.

It was at that point Miller began working as a stand-up comic, playing sets in Edmonton's local comedy clubs.

And soon after, he began touring. He was the only Native stand-up comic working in western Canada, a unique and powerful voice on the comedy club circuit.

"I was lucky. I got a lot of work very quickly, which really helped. It helped with everything – with my writing, my delivery and my timing."

One of the highlights in Miller's career was meeting and becoming friends with his idol, comic Charlie Hill. A much sought-after stand-up comedian and actor, Hill had made a name for himself through politically charged humour.

"He paved the way for everyone doing Native-serving humour. He was the godfather of what we do, of what I'm now doing," explains Miller.

The two became close friends before Hill's untimely death in 2013, often travelling together between shows.

"Charlie could plough through an audience of 300 or 3000 people. And our styles were similar. He would tell jokes that were in your face. And that's what I like to do, too."

Edgy, in-your-face humour, of course, is not for everyone. And Miller says he's developed a keen ability to read a crowd. He goes into a set with a beginning, middle and end. But he always leaves room to change things up, depending on who he's entertaining.

"I'll know within the first 30 seconds how they perceive me. I generally look to the older people in the crowd to get a sense of whether or not they're laughing. And if they are, I might go into the more colonialism, dark, back-handed humour," says Miller.

"I don't want to be offensive. And I don't want people to feel too uncomfortable. This isn't about white bashing. But at the same time, I want to communicate the truth. That's important to me."

That sensitivity comes in handy for the corporate gigs Miller plays, where the largely wealthy, buttoned-up audience members tend to be more conservative than the First Nations crowds he plays to on reservations.

"Some people are so sensitive – it's just amazing. I'll make a self-deprecating joke, even about my weight. And people will get offended for me," says Miller.

Miller says he's hopeful about Canada's future, that he can envision a day when Aboriginal people will face less racism. But he adds that racism remains a reality for many. And since it is, he's going to continue to make fun of it – relentlessly.

"If I hear someone being racist, it's horrible. But to me, it's a joke, that someone would view and judge another because of the colour of their skin. I feel the more I joke about it, the more power I'm taking away from it."

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Gone but not forgotten

Monument to commemorate youth activist Shannen Koostachin

by Joshua Grant

It's been more than five years since Shannen Koostachin tragically passed away. The passionate youth activist had galvanized students across Canada in her campaign to pressure the federal government to improve school facilities and First Nations curriculum in Aboriginal communities across the country. Now her distant relative Jules Koostachin is working to preserve Shannen's memory and inspire others to take up her work.

Spurred on by the difficulties she faced in public school because of her Cree background, Jules Koostachin is raising money via an Indiegogo campaign to construct a permanent monument in New Liskeard, Ontario. The statue would be a permanent reminder of Shannen's vision and achievements as a young activist.

A Cree from Attawapiskat First Nation, Jules is a social activist, owns a multi-media production company, VisJuelles Productions, and works at Laurentian University in Sudbury.

Shannen attended Attawapiskat's infamous elementary school that consisted of cold, rat-infested portables after a diesel spill had contaminated local school grounds. After moving to New Liskeard to pursue a better education in a "real" high school, she and family friend Rose Thornton would die in a car accident in May 2010.

The bronze monument, as described on the Indiegogo fundraising site, would feature a "figurative description of Shannen in her traditional regalia, incorporating impressionistic touches… through drapery into a granite base."

Jules and her team recently secured an extension for the campaign; it will be open to donations until June 30. To date, almost $10,000 of the $25,000 goal has been raised. Jules is hoping for more support from the local community and other First Nations

communities throughout Ontario, Quebec and the rest of Canada.

"We really need the community support to get this happening," Jules told *the Nation*, "I don't really want it to be a corporate thing, it would be nice to keep it within the community."

Jules' project team consists of design and cultural consultant Kenneth Jake Chakasim, sculptor Tyler Fauvelle and documentary filmmaker Rick Miller. The four have been working for two-and-a-half years to make the monument a reality, developing a working design, securing a location in New Liskeard and documenting the entire process. Jules and Miller plan to produce a documentary film of the process and installation called "The Butterfly Monument," that will eventually be available online as an Indigenous archive and a document of their endeavour.

"I didn't realize what I was in for," laughed Jules. "I just had this kind of epiphany, a sort of dream. I see the end result, but it's been a long process."

Jules described growing up as an Aboriginal youth in the Canadian education system. She said she struggled to learn in an unfamiliar language and has a vivid memory of being struck by a kindergarten teacher when she was five years old.

"I remember being in line at school and whispering to a friend. My teacher hit me so hard she almost knocked me out. I was the only Native girl in that class, I remember feeling like that's why I was singled out."

Jules credits her Cree grandparents as a source of strength in the adversity she's faced throughout her social and academic life. She added that the strength and resolve Shannen showed as a young female First Nations activist can also be attributed to her parents Andrew Koostachin and Jenny Nakogee.

"When you have strong roots it's really hard for someone to pluck you out." Jules said. "It was the same thing with Shannen, thanks to her parents."

Shannen's legacy lives on today through "Shannen's Dream," the ongoing campaign for equitable education and the "safe and comfy schools" that Shannen had always hoped to see for Indigenous children. In 2014, Attawapiskat finally saw the construction of a new school, but lack of funding and infrastructure for education still plague many First Nations communities across Canada.

Shannen Koostachin

Any additional funds raised by the memorial campaign will be donated to the struggle for accessible education for First Nations youth.

Jules and her team have now secured a location in New Liskeard for Shannen's monument and hope to complete construction before an unveiling ceremony in October. As well as the statue, they plan to install two butterfly benches in honour of Shannen and Rose Thornton that features a plaque with one of Thornton's favourite quotes.

"Because Shannen loved butterflies so much we thought it would be a good idea to commemorate her that way," Jules related. "The butterfly has a cultural significance: it signifies our youth in transformation."

Jules also noted that New Liskeard is an apt location for this sort of landmark, both because of Shannen's connection to the community, the relative accessibility it offers to First Nations and the high traffic it receives from the Trans-Canada Highway.

"New Liskeard is a really good reminder of how many kids are in that sort of situation," said Jules. "Kids who have to travel so far and sometimes fly in just to access education."

Those interested in making a contribution to the Shannen Koostachin Monument campaign can do so at: www.indiegogo.com/projects/shannen-koostachin-monument.

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Cree School Board
Commission Scolaire Crie

Nominations for the position of Chairperson of the Cree School Board will be open from June 8 until June 19, 2015.

THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR BEING ELIGIBLE TO HOLD OFFICE AS A CHAIRPERSON ARE:

- [✓] to be a member of the Cree Nation;
- [✓] to be of the age of majority at the date of the elections (18 years of age on July 21, 2015);
- [✓] not to be subject to protective supervision within the meaning of the *Civil Code*;
- [✓] not to have been found guilty by a court of competent jurisdiction of any offense under the *Education Act*, the *Education Act for Cree, Inuit and Naskapis Native Persons* or under any act relating to federal, provincial, municipal or school.

ELECTION OF CHAIRPERSON

The members of the Cree Nation shall elect from among themselves one (1) Commissioner who shall act both as the Commissioner and Chairperson of the Cree School Board elected by the Cree Nation Government.

This election shall be held every three (3) years on a date determined by the Council.

This election shall be held in accordance with the procedures set out in the By-law Respecting Procedures for the Election of the Chairperson of the Cree School Board.

The price ain't right

NDP begins campaign for affordable food in the north

by Lyle Stewart

Making Healthy Choices
More Affordable!
We are committed to offering you a full range of healthy food choices at affordable prices.
All Nutrition North Canada program subsidies are being passed on to you, but that's not all. New technology and strategic planning gives us the ability to continually find better and more efficient ways to bring you the products you want at lower prices.
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Northern
healthyeating
NorthMART

At a time the Nutrition North program is coming under heavy fire for failing to lower food prices in isolated northern communities, the Northern Stores chain is posting notices defending its participation in the program.

As pictured, Northern claims that all program subsidies are being passed on to consumers. "We are committed to offering you a full range of healthy food choices at affordable prices," says the poster.

The only problem, MP Romeo Saganash (Abitibi–Baie-James–Nunavik–Eeyou) told a conference in Rouyn-Noranda June 5, is that there is no way to verify if that claim is true. What is true, he noted, is that food prices remain punishingly high, forcing First Nations and Inuit communities to consume less healthy, processed foods that add to health problems in the north.

That's why, in June 2013, Saganash wrote the Auditor General of Canada to ask that he examine problems with the Nutrition North program, which has so far cost upward of $500 million.

"In the autumn of 2014, the Auditor General delivered a devastating report," said Saganash. "He wrote that the program was not functioning, that the minister responsible had not implemented a mechanism to verify how the $60 million Nutrition North budget was used each year."

Saganash then proposed in the House of Commons that the program be reviewed in depth.

Nutrition North program needs overhauling

by Joel Barde

The issue of expensive food in the north was debated in Parliament on June 4. It was opposition day – a day that allowed the NDP to set the agenda – and MPs used it to discuss solutions to the high cost of groceries in northern communities.

The NDP pushed the Conservative government to throw more money behind the Nutrition North program. The program is meant to offset the price of groceries in northern communities by providing subsidies to grocery stores.

Northwest Territories MP Dennis Bevington led the NDP call.

"The price of food is killing us," explained Bevington to *the Nation* in a phone interview following the parliamentary debate. "It's gone up so much. Combined with the cost of energy, it's getting to the point where people can't live here anymore."

Bevington said that additional money is needed to fund the program, and argued that the program needs to be expanded to an additional 50 communities that do not currently receive the subsidy.

The Nutrition Program, however, is highly controversial. The $60 million program gives subsidies directly to retailers, who are supposed to pass them on to consumers.

"In the 30 years that I have been travelling across the north, the one issue that has never changed is the cost of food," he reflected. "This type of issue is extremely important for everyone living in the north."

As detailed in the sidebar, the NDP used an opposition day June 4 to debate the program and how Canada can truly promote food sovereignty in the north. An NDP motion calling on the government to fix Nutrition North accompanied the debate.

"We need to develop a comprehensive strategy in collaboration with the people of the north," Saganash emphasized. "There are 55 northern communities that are not even eligible for these subsidies, yet are just as inaccessible."

Among those is Chisasibi, he noted. That's why he says the NDP will include a "respect for the north" campaign in the next election battle. "We will fix these types of programs what were conceived without the input of the people who actually live there," Saganash said.

"Nutrition North needs a major overhaul. It was designed in the absence of people who inhabit the north. Now we have a historic election coming soon. We have a real chance to make a change."

But a 2011 Auditor General report revealed that Aboriginal Affairs has no means of regulating whether or not the subsidies grocers receive are passed on to customers. Many people in northern communities say that grocers are price gouging, that it is making it impossible for them to have a decent and balanced diet.

Bevington said that he wants the government to set up a system that would better mange Nutrition North, though he isn't clear on what form it would take.

"The program needs a full review about how it functions. It currently subsidizes the retailers. We would prefer a program that subsidizes the consumer," said Bevington.

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Division remains despite court decision

Mistissini's Pentecostal community at odds with church organization

by Joshua Grant

After a year of controversy and legal proceedings over the rightful leadership of the Living Water Assembly Church in Mistissini, Court of Quebec Justice Robert Dufresne has ruled in favour of Pastor Johnny Dixon, his board of directors and interested party, the Pentecostal Assembly of Canada (PAOC).

In question were the legal rights to the church land located at 304 Amisk Street, bank accounts, church assets, the name "Living Water Assembly" and a push by Pastor Joseph Blacksmith to disaffiliate the church from the PAOC. Blacksmith, Jeremiah Abel Mianscum and Roger Gingras were named as the defendants in the court case after incorporating the name "Living Water Assembly" as a Canadian non-profit. The three were accused of taking over the building on Amisk Street and attempting to separate from its parent organization over the course of the last year.

The root of the dispute dates back to the 1970s and the construction of the original Mistissini Pentecostal Assembly, pastored by Harry Mianscum and affiliated with the PAOC in 1976. According to an affidavit Mianscum signed on November 10, 2014, the Mistissini Band Council gave the land on Amisk Street to him. He also stated that the church was built through the labour and financial support of the congregation and the property was never relinquished to the PAOC or anyone else in the community.

In 1990, Mianscum led a movement away from the PAOC and formed the Perch River Fellowship, a church community independent of any provincial or national religious organization. In more recent years the church was lead by Dixon, who was replaced by Blacksmith on April 7, 2013. When health problems led to Blacksmith's hospitalization later that year, Dixon stepped back in as interim pastor but was reportedly locked out of the church in January 2014 after Blacksmith had recovered. Blacksmith subsequently called public meetings January 20 and February 1, 2014, to discuss a "new vision" of Living Water's future and address the possibility of disassociating the church from the PAOC.

Interviews with both Dixon and Blacksmith make it clear that the two church leaders have different visions for the Pentecostal community of Mistissini. Dixon is adamant that Living Water Assembly belongs with the Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada and has their full support. Blacksmith feels that the church has little to gain from affiliation with the PAOC and that the church belongs to the community of Mistissini, which has made significant financial contributions to the parent organization with little to show in return.

In a surprising role reversal since the court ruling, Dixon says he is hoping for reconciliation. Blacksmith, however, does not believe that to be possible as long as the church remains under the direction of the PAOC.

The Nation spoke to both pastors regarding their opinions on the situation, the conflict between the two groups, reactions to the court verdict and their individual take on the future of Mistissini's Pentecostal community, here's what they had to say.

Pastor Johnny Dixon

"I'm happy that it's over with. It's taken a toll on everybody and people were anxious to see the result. The main thing now is deciding how we will move forward, working with each other, understanding each other and not having any bad feelings towards one another. The goal [now] is to try and bring peace to the entire community, not just with our two groups.

"Personally, I think there will always be a divide. There already was a previous division before any of these issues. As long as that issue is not resolved we will continue to see this turmoil. I don't really know how

"Personally, I think there will always be a divide. There already was a previous division before any of these issues. As long as that issue is not resolved we will continue to see this turmoil."

Pastor Johnny Dixon

"The community is and always has been affected by the spiritual leadership of the churches. It's the same thing as how a chief runs a community. The spiritual leadership of a pastor, how a leader leads his people, that's the way that they will go."

Pastor Joseph Blacksmith

this whole thing started, why they wanted the Living Water name anyways, it's always puzzled us. They always sort of looked down on us and then when they wanted to disaffiliate, all of a sudden the name became important.

"I believe that justice has been served and the judge's decision was the right one. It's something we had always believed in. Living Water [Assembly] has always been us, it's our name, and the assets were ours. Hopefully [the court ruling] doesn't separate us in a greater degree, the main concern our people had was reconciliation.

"When the ministers and pastors all came together in the wake of the Lake Bussy tragedy there seemed to be an opening and we were able to communicate again. I was happy but also I was cautious. I told some people that once the verdict arrives that will be the real test. I wrote Pastor Blacksmith a letter recently, telling him he's welcome to use the church for weddings and things like that and that we should continue the openness that we had. I was glad Joseph made that effort [at the Lake Bussy memorial service] and hopefully it will continue after this verdict.

"On Sunday, June 7, we held our first service on Amisk Street since the conflict, there were mixed feelings and some people weren't there. They [the other group] left it in good condition. We're glad to be back in our building and have those bank accounts open after a year of being frozen. We're really glad to have our identity back. It felt like we had that stolen from us but the judge made a just decision."

Pastor Joseph Blacksmith

"We've decided not to appeal. They never took the time to gather all of the information and we never really had a chance to present our case. Our lawyer was only given 20 minutes [in court] and the other lawyer had a couple of hours.

"A lot of Elders who were involved in the community always hoped that someone would come and open the doors and allow the people to be free, out from under the PAOC. People are lost and hurt since the PAOC came in. When we sit and talk to the Elders they say, 'Who are these people? Who do they work for? What do they do with our money?' I know that most of that money doesn't come back into the Native communities.

"I think the people who remain with the PAOC think that the PAOC is there to serve them. Some people almost see the PAOC as God. I know some people I've talked to sound as if they live in fear, bound by laws and regulations. We're bound by God's laws, not by the laws of the PAOC. The people who understand this, they want to get out from that, they want to be free to do what God wants them to do.

"The PAOC has received hundreds of thousands of dollars from Native communities and they've done nothing in return to help. They only show up when situations like this happen, when the people rise up. When the people need help spiritually they never show up. They don't know the community and they don't even know the condition of the spirituality of the people. They don't care.

Pastor Joseph Blacksmith

"The community is and always has been affected by the spiritual leadership of the churches. It's the same thing as how a chief runs a community. The spiritual leadership of a pastor, how a leader leads his people, that's the way that they will go.

"There are people [in the community] who have been bringing in the gospel, people who have brought healing. When the PAOC came in they shut the doors on the people. They've always stopped these people from spreading the gospel to other communities, unless they were sent by the PAOC. People's hands were tied.

"We've already talked to the band council about building a new church so hopefully we can get land granted to us to build on. Perch River [Fellowship] is willing to work with us and people that came out of the PAOC are ready to work with us. We'll get organized again and start working with Perch River and see what happens from there."

Bobby Drapeau dies in plane crash

Construction veteran well known to Crees

by Lyle Stewart

Robert Jr. "Bobby" Drapeau was a man of action. The 48-year-old construction veteran with a quick laugh and quicker wit never stopped moving. He died on the move, on a foggy June 11 evening, when his twin-engine Piper Aztec crashed only two kilometres from the airport in the Nunavik village of Kangirsuk.

He was travelling there with his 23-year-old son, Alexandre Veilleux, and pilot Bob Corbin, 77, to deliver a cargo hold full of groceries to the community and to see his two adopted Inuit daughters. Veilleux and Corbin were to continue on as Drapeau set about preparing employees of the construction firm he founded there – Kong-struction, the company profiled in *the Nation* recently – for a busy work season.

The community honoured him in a ceremony June 15. According to the Nunatsiaq News, messages from local residents flooded Drapeau's Facebook page, thanking Drapeau for all he had invested into their community, calling him a "caring" and "helpful" person.

"I will complete your wish and dream, I will live up to the promises you made me promise," wrote one young Kong-struction employee.

Drapeau was well known to the Crees, many of whom he knew since childhood, particularly in Waswanipi. Later, working with his father's firm, Construction Val-d'Or, he would manage projects across Eeyou Istchee, training and employing many Crees along the way.

He would even make an impact in South America, where he travelled in his 20s to oversee the construction of an airport in Guyana for a Canadian mining firm. Because it received international flights, it was officially named "Bobby Drapeau International Airport" while the mine remained open.

After selling his stake in his late father's firm a few years ago, he was hired by the Kativik Regional Government to teach heavy equipment operation to Inuk workers in Kangirsuk. He fell in love with the community and, typical of his approach, had a vision of an Inuit-run company that would grow to work on projects across the north. This spring, Drapeau began meeting with companies, among them the Raglan mine, to sell the talents he had helped nurture. He was on the verge of realizing his dream when fate claimed him.

Robert Jr. "Bobby" Drapeau

As he told *the Nation* last April, creating a local company that employs and trains local people was important to him. "I've seen many southern companies bring a lot of people in and not hire any local Inuit people. Or if they did, only to do the most menial jobs like picking up scrap materials. I didn't appreciate that. So that's why we're trying to turn this in another direction."

His approach was deeply personal, which is why he gained such love and respect from those whose lives he touched. "We use every opportunity to teach one another," he told *the Nation*. "That's why we are a family. We learn to respect the rules, and we come into work on time. That's our philosophy: learn one, do one, teach one."

Rest in peace, Bobby Drapeau.

Silver jubilee

First Peoples Festival celebrates its 25th birthday

by Akiva Levitas

The silver anniversary of the upcoming First Peoples Festival will be one for the ages. With the lineup of concerts, gallery events and parades, the weeklong festival takes place at Place des Festivals in the heart of downtown Montreal from July 29 to August 5.

This year the event marks its 25th year of existence and starting from humble beginnings, it has managed to become an integral part of the festival season in Montreal.

Founded during a time of heightened tension following the Oka Crisis of 1990, the issue of finding resources for the festival almost put a stop to it before it even began. "It was difficult to get people interested in a festival for First Nations at that time because of the situation at Oka," said André Dudemaine, President of event organizer Land InSights.

It was thanks a benefit concert held at Café Campus in the spring of 1991 that the festival was able to launch. As a tribute to the original benefit concert, the organizers are bringing back Florent Vollant and Richard Desjardins to perform together as they did 25 years ago.

Also marking the anniversary is the Transcestral concert, which is the brainchild of artists Moe Clark and Katia Makdiss-Warren. Over 22 performers from around the world will be collaborating together to bring their culturally rich music styles to life for the audience. For the more electronically inclined among us, the night with DJ Mad Eskimo and Inuit singer Sylvia Cloutier will help you find your groove.

Le Traverse by Michel Despatie

The Tiger and the Deer by Sergio Sibrián

In addition to the music, the film selection of this year's event also hearkens back to the festival's origins with a special showing of Alanis Obomsawin's *Khanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance*. Plus, there will be a few world premieres in the lineup with international submissions as well as shorts by Aboriginal artists.

For the second consecutive year, APTN will be handing out their recognition award to Aboriginal filmmakers who have made their mark. APTN is also offering four master classes for First Nations filmmakers.

With so many activities it can be hard to decide which one to check out, but one event you cannot miss is the Nuestroamericana Friendship Parade, featuring over 700 costumed dancers, on August 1.

But remember no matter which day of the event you attend, there will be galleries, including the Espace Ashukan or the Canadian Guild of Crafts, showcasing the talent of Aboriginal artists. Jeff Veregge, an interesting artist from Seattle, will inspire the comic-book nerd in all of us as his works combine comic-book imagery with traditional Salish design.

No matter what your interest, there is something for everyone and everyone is welcome at the festival as it celebrate its 25th year.

For more information: www.presenceautochtone.ca

"Reprofiled" or redirected?

Where did AANDC put that missing $1-billion?

by Jesse Staniforth

News that Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada (AANDC) failed to spend $1-billion budgeted for First Nations services over the last five years didn't catch Quebec's Indigenous organizations by surprise. After all, barely more than two weeks before the news broke in early June, the 40-year-old organization Quebec Native Women had learned it was having its funding cut by $175,000, a blow that will likely force the organization to shut down.

But according to AANDC, no money has been lost.

According to AANDC spokesperson Valerie Hache, "97.2% of the alleged funding lapse for the five fiscal years mentioned in the internal memo was carried forward to future years. During this period, funding for essential services was not 'held back.'"

When asked whether that funding was added to the budgets of years that followed creating a surplus, or whether the money replaced dollar-amounts in future budgets, AANDC Media Relations person Michelle Perron described the process of carrying budget balances forward as "reprofiling."

"The reprofiling amounts, approved after Public Accounts, result primarily from initiatives such as specific claims," she told *the Nation* by email. "For example, in fiscal year 2013-14 the department lapsed $502 million in Grants and Contributions, of which $497 million or 99% is attributable to funding for the Specific Claims Settlement Fund which was reprofiled to future years."

Perron said the remaining 1% that had gone unspent amounted to "$31 million, or 0.1% of the department's total grants and contributions budget over the last five years."

However, MP Niki Ashton, the NDP Aboriginal Affairs critic, does not believe the AANDC is telling the truth.

"There's such a thing as creative accounting, and I think this is definitely a case of that," she told *the Nation*. "We've heard them make similar arguments. It's untrue. And somehow they coast over the chronic underfunding that the auditor general, Indigenous organizations, and communities have pointed to."

Ashton said she did not believe that the money had been simply moved forward and spent in other places when it was discovered in surplus.

"I am aware in the past of other departments that have seen funding left over by the end of the fiscal year and have reached out to work with organization to make things happen with that money," she said. "I've never heard of such a significant amount of money being 'lapsed,' which is their favourite word for this. And it's not just a significant amount, but an amount that is tied to a department that has as its mandate providing direct, life-or-death services for a segment of Canadians that need it most."

Ashton noted the Special Claims fund, named by Perron as the key target for most of these funds, was recently cited in a damning report as being a dysfunctional process.

"We also know that the government has been notoriously slow in

showing good faith when it comes to Specific Claims negotiations, land claims, entitlement issues more broadly," Ashton said. "It's pretty rich to hear them say that Special Claims is where funding has been going. Absolutely Specific Claims processes need to go forward and be resolved as soon as possible, but I don't think they're convincing anyone that that's where the money has been redirected."

Ashton argued that rather than simply being applied to other projects, the funds were likely used to help the Harper government balance the budget in an election year.

"It's pretty clear, given the major gaps between non-Indigenous and Indigenous Canadians that any accounting this government is engaging in involves doing it on the backs of Indigenous communities in particular," she said.

However the amount of the lapsed funding brought one issue to mind for Ashton – the amount Harper had pledged to use to boost First Nations education across Canada.

"When he was pushing the Education Act, the commitment was $1.9 billion," she said. "It's not lost on many that this is almost the amount of money that the prime minister himself recognized should be funneled into education – and that has not taken place. It's an enormous symbolic amount."

The Conservative government, Ashton argued, has demonstrated a history of disrespect toward Indigenous people and organizations. She cited the government's unwillingness to launch an inquiry into missing and murdered Indigenous women and continued underfunding of education as examples.

"When you have $1 billion committed to funding Indigenous communities that goes unspent, that speaks volumes to how little respect they have for Indigenous communities, and how little they care about the very serious issues that Indigenous communities face," she said. "There are 95 First Nations or Indigenous entities that the government is in some stage of legal challenge with in the courts. Clearly the government has some misplaced priorities. It is appalling that they're making up excuses about a significant sum of money that is frankly owed to Indigenous communities, that was earmarked for them, and is badly needed."

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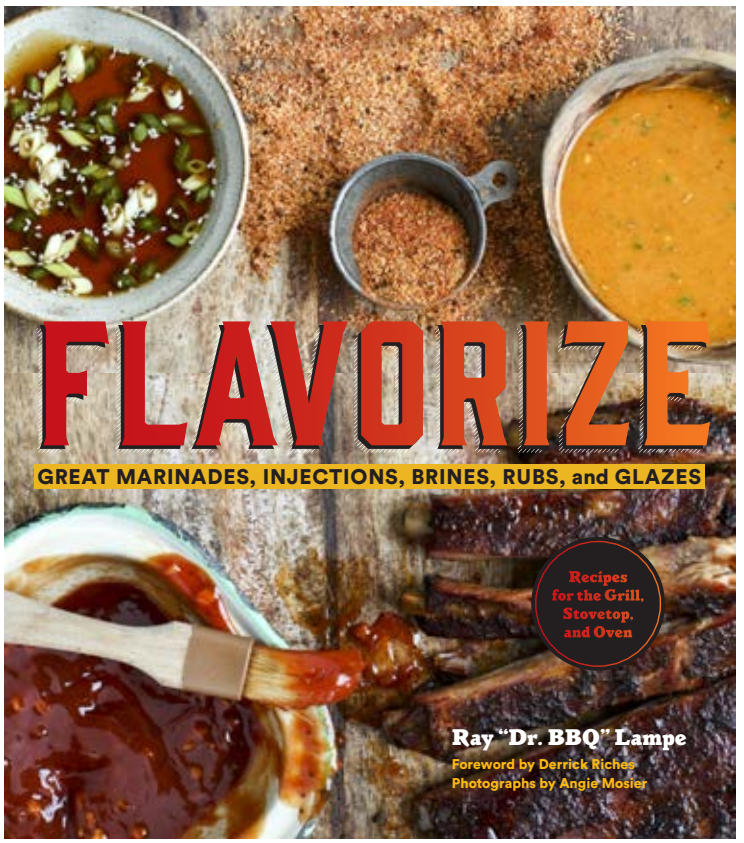
Flavourize it

Raising the bar on your meat game

by Amy German


FLAVORIZE
GREAT MARINADES, INJECTIONS, BRINES, RUBS, and GLAZES
Recipes for the Grill, Stovetop, and Oven
Ray "Dr. BBQ" Lampe
Foreword by Derrick Riches
Photographs by Angie Mosier

When it comes to boasting the best steaks, most succulent chicken or mind-blowing pork chops in the community, knowing how to step up that game with a marinade, rub, injection, glaze or brine can be what separates the ordinary from the extraordinary.

While anyone can sprinkle a bit of seasoning on to a burger before preparation or soaking the steaks in a marinade of your favourite flavourings, only a master knows the right measurement of each ingredient and how to use it effectively to transform the meal into a memorable experience.

Whether you are new to cooking or a seasoned pro, Ray "Dr. BBQ" Lampe's latest, *Flavorize: Great Marinades, Injections, Brines, Rubs, and Glazes*, makes for an awesome year-round guide on how to kick your meat game up a notch whether you are barbecuing, roasting, frying or preparing a holiday turkey.

With recipes that span cuisines from around the globe, if nothing pleases your family more than a carnivorous feast, this guide to flavouring your meat with expertise features incredibly easy and fun-to-prepare recipes that will have your neighbours asking what's for dinner and everyone lining up for seconds.

To see for your self, why not give these recipes a try.

Big Bad Steak Marinade

Goes well with pork, beef, lamb

Just as it's named, this marinade is bold and not for any wimpy meats or wimpy palates.

- 1 cup (240 ml) full-bodied red wine
- ½ cup (120 ml) olive oil
- ½ cup (120 ml) fresh orange juice
- ¼ cup (60 ml) soy sauce
- 12 garlic cloves, coarsely chopped
- 4 sprigs fresh rosemary, stripped from the stem
- 2 tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp Morton's Kosher Salt

In the pitcher of a blender, combine the wine, olive oil, orange juice, soy sauce, garlic, rosemary, pepper and salt. Blend them on high speed for about 30 seconds until they are mixed well. This may be made up to 12 hours ahead and kept covered in the refrigerator.

Makes about 2¼ cups (540 ml)

Maple Brine

All brines need a sweetener to temper the salt, and maple syrup turns this one into a very special treat. Be sure to use real maple syrup. It's a little pricey, but the true maple flavour is well worth it.

2 cups (480 ml) water, plus 2 cups (480 ml) ice water
½ cup (120 ml) pure maple syrup
¼ cup (60 g) Morton's Kosher Salt
1 tbsp vanilla extract
1 tsp granulated onion
1 tsp black pepper
½ tsp cinnamon
¼ tsp ground nutmeg

In a medium saucepan over medium heat, combine the 2 cups (480 ml) water, maple syrup, salt, vanilla, granulated onion, pepper, cinnamon and nutmeg. Mix them well. Bring the mixture to a simmer, stirring often. Cook it for 1 to 2 minutes, until the salt and syrup are dissolved. Add the ice water to a large bowl. Pour the hot brine over the ice water. With a large spoon, mix well until everything is blended. Refrigerate the brine for at least 2 hours, until well chilled. Use it immediately or keep it refrigerated for up to 1 week.

Makes about 1 qt (960 ml)

Maple-Brined Pork Chops

There is something really special about the combination of grilled pork and maple syrup, and these are a great example. I think the chops are great paired with grilled sweet corn and grilled Texas toast.

4 bone-in pork chops, about ¾ in (2 cm) thick
1 recipe cold Maple Brine (see previous recipe)
2 tbsp pure maple syrup

Place the chops in a large heavy-duty zip-top bag. Pour the brine over them. Seal the bag, squeezing out as much air as possible. Place the bag in a pan or bowl in case of leakage and refrigerate it for 3 to 4 hours, occasionally moving the chops around within the bag.

Prepare an outdoor grill to cook direct over medium heat. Remove the chops from the brine and rinse them under cold water. Dry the chops well. Place them on the grill and cook them for 5 to 6 minutes, until they're golden brown. Flip them over and cook them for another 5 to 6 minutes, until they reach an internal temperature of 150°F (65°C) deep in the centre. Remove them to a plate and brush each chop with the maple syrup on all sides. Serve one chop to each guest.

Makes 4 servings

Secret Apple Juice Injection

Apple juice is a great place to start when making a pork injection and is the secret to many of the great recipes used by barbecue contest champions. Once apple juice and pork are in the mix, the other combinations are endless, so feel free to customize this one with your favourite flavours.

1½ cups (360 ml) apple juice
¼ cup (50 g) Sugar In The Raw or other raw sugar
1 tbsp Morton's Kosher Salt
2 tbsp yellow mustard
2 tbsp soy sauce
½ tsp cayenne

In a medium bowl, combine the apple juice, raw sugar, salt, mustard, soy sauce and cayenne. With a fork or whisk, mix everything until well blended. Cover and refrigerate the mixture for up to 1 week.

Makes about 2 cups (480 ml)

Spare Rib Surprise

The surprise here is all of the flavour next to the bone from the flavourful injection. Macaroni and cheese and collard greens will go very well on this table.

2 slabs (about 4 lb [1.8 kg] each) whole spareribs
1 recipe Secret Apple Juice Injection (see previous recipe)
1 cup (220 g) barbecue rub such as Barbecue Rub #34
½ cup (120 ml) apple juice

A half hour before you plan to cook, peel the membrane off the back of the ribs and cut the flap of meat across the bone side off. Trim any excess fat.

Using a kitchen injector, inject the ribs in between the bones from both ends until all of the injection liquid has been used up. Season the ribs liberally on both sides with the rub. Refrigerate them until needed.

Prepare a barbecue pit or outdoor grill to cook indirect at 275°F (135°C) using a small amount of applewood for flavour. Place the ribs meaty-side up on the grill and close the lid. Cook them for 2 hours. Flip the ribs over and cook them for another hour.

Lay out two large double-thick sheets of heavy-duty aluminum foil. Lay a slab of ribs on each, meaty-side up. As you begin to fold the foil up around the ribs, add ¼ cup (60 ml) of the apple juice to the bottom of each package. Continue folding the foil up around the ribs, closing it into a package. Return the rib packets to the cooker for 1 hour, or until the ribs are tender when poked with a toothpick.

Remove the ribs from the foil and place them back on the grill meaty-side up. Cook them for 15 minutes more, until the ribs are firmed up. Place the ribs meaty-side down on a cutting board and use a sharp knife to cut through the slab completely at each rib. To serve, flip the ribs over, reconstructing the slabs on a platter.

Makes 4 to 6 servings

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To the Editor,

I had an opportunity to read the article written by Joel Barde that was published in the April 17, 2015 issue (Vol. 22, No. 12) of *the Nation* claiming to outline the financial state of my community of Whapmagoostui and wanted to take this time to express my profound disappointment with your magazine and to refute some of the comments, allegations and innuendos made within the article.

The Nation magazine is said to provide a "linkage between its readership, the entrepreneurs, corporations and other entities who participate in the social economic development of the Cree communities specifically; the James Bay Territory." In light of this rather ostentatious mission statement, I would have thought the editorial staff of *the Nation* would have been seeking news accounts, which would tend to accentuate the positive aspects of community evolution and improvement.

Unfortunately, the April 17 issue of your magazine opted to publish an article whose primary intent, evidently, was to propagate a tale of economic woes with regard to the financial administration of my community. If the editorial staff of *the Nation* view that the article will somehow serve to provide its readership with a reasonable, credible and unbiased account of what has been going on here over the course of the past several years, then I am afraid they are sadly mistaken.

It escapes me how any reader of that article can come away with a sense that the community of Whapmagoostui is anything but an economic catastrophe speeding down the road to hardship and ruin. If this is *the Nation*'s "modus operandi" for engendering positive vibes amongst advertisers, investors or entrepreneurs who may be looking for opportunities in Eeyou Istchee, then perhaps it should re-examine its' approach.

The article is offensive to my community and myself for a number of reasons.

Firstly, it is largely based on an internal privileged report which came into the journalist's hands surreptitiously. Of the said report, it is a "working draft" that had been prepared by a consultant that is not under our payroll but rather, under that, of Cree Nation Government. Although the authors of the report were highly critical of the manner in which the WFN was managing its fiscal affairs, many of the conclusions contained therein were, in my opinion, somewhat biased and formulated on an incomplete knowledge of the daily living conditions and plight faced by the residents of my community. For this reason, some of the recommendations which flowed from the conclusions were unrealistic and inappropriate but dealt with as deemed necessary.

Secondly, prior to writing the article, the journalist and I had discussed the matter over the phone during which time it was evident to me that he already had been enlightened to a considerable extent regarding the content of the internal report. It was confirmed to him that because of the unique living conditions and constraints we were operating under in our community, WFN literally had no choice but to incur some expenditures that resulted in some deficits. Although an invitation was extended to him to come and live for a time in the community to see first-hand the kind of conditions and duress under which we have to operate, he declined the offer, preferring to accept as a gospel truth to everything that was written in the internal report by an external consultant that views our misfortunes as a cash cow for his pockets.

It would seem that some of the harsh criticisms being levied against me may be originating with members of my own community and I say this for a number of reasons, one of them being the fact they never supported me, do not believe in my vision and fear that I may just do what could not be done. There are always some people who will execute cowardly acts to destroy you by whatever means they can to hide their own past devious acts, blinded by arrogance. Generally, I ignore these type of clouded egos knowing the majority of community members whom I serve are appreciative for my efforts, on their behalf, thus providing me with sufficient gratification to continue moving forward in the best possible way.

Additionally, a number of allegations relating to the misuse or over-expenditure of funds have been mustered against me in recent times. Such accusations can be distressing and hurtful particularly when it is clearly evident the said expenditures had occurred either prior to my appointment or in some instances, had to be settled during my term because they were outstanding.

The following examples are cited by way of illustrating the kind of unfunded expenditures that had occurred prior to my mandate which was back in the end August of 2009 and are simply a typical sampling, an attempt to set the record straight:

- 2003-2004 Police Station Project cost overruns (year ending where WFN first encountered a cumulative deficit of -$3,612,436 that included a $2,733,900 outstanding debt from the 1992 arena project)
- 2005 Cree Health Board's 5 duplexes (WFN for an extended period of time waited before the initial payment was made and resulted in cash flow shortfalls - $2,045,000, of which, WFN had no financial capacity to bridge finance such a project)

- 2006 Water Well and Lagoon Project (-$3,500,000)
- 2006 Community Hall Transformation Project (which took 4 years to complete left us with a hefty -$4,210,000 to settle because of delays and continuous changes on the concepts and design)
- 2007 Salary Adjustment Project that saw an increase of 41% in our operating expenditures
- 2007 Municipal garage project, -$1.98 million
- 2008 Municipal Vehicle Purchasing/Overhaul (we continue to pay of this equipment revolving fund)
- 2009 Home Ownership Project, -$317,000
- 2008-2009, 17 month period prior to my mandate: $3,028,289 on professional/consulting fees had been spent
- 2009 year ending, Police Operations deficit was -$1,735,158
- 2009 Emergency Fund and Funeral Assistance deficit was at -$464,130
- 2009 Housing Renovation Project (-$600,000 + in cost overruns)

By early 2010, WFN needed close to $7.2 million in cash and had a cumulative debt of $5.7 million. The deficit did not become to be in a couple of months, the deficit has been accumulating since 2004.

All of the above did not have firm budgets but had to be done or it would seem, the past administrators and councils felt it was necessary to execute only to become a heavy burden for my generation of leaders. Most of these funds have now been recovered and deficits resolved since 2012. When I say year ending 2009, I do not wish to implicate past leaders and administrators despite the facts. Five months into my first term, the audited statements had to be presented; all budgets and projects were already approved beforehand, before I stepped into office.

Other contributing factors to our financial problems continue to result from the following:

- Cree Trappers Association (local), continues to accumulate a deficit (-$789,854 in 2009 and to date, around $947,000 that should not have to be absorbed by the WFN)
- Rental Arrears, as of to date are $3.847 million (money people owe themselves)
- Outstanding General Band Members Accounts (AR) -$630,000
- Development Corporation -$1,920,395 in where WFN had to intervene, more than once in the past
- Major increase in fuel costs that lead to an increased airfare, air cargo, hydro and shipment rates. 2014 year ending, we experienced a- $1,334,137 in unanticipated expenditures. A fact ignored by the CNG financial consultant that did the report.

As chief, I chose to keep my own people employed and disengage with 6 firms that were advising and doing consulting work for the WFN in a variety of designated fields up to 2010. My council chose to adopt a financial recovery plan with a financial administrative by-law rather than just skating around the idea as it was done in the past. We have never really cut any services or programs even though we were barely keeping our heads above the surface of the water. At one time, a senior execute of the CNG and a financial consultant that was recommended by CNG, CRA then, advised me to let go and send home 20 to 25 of my own staff but I chose not to because I have to put the people first.

In 2011, we secured a $5 million loan with our own treaty money under James Bay Eeyou Companee in where we pay a reasonable interest that is in turn injected back to our own pool of funds. Not only that, 25% of the interest is given back to our community to fund programs and projects. Outside consultants could not even secure us a bank loan while they danced around it for two years. We would not have been seeking this fund if restricted funds were not used to finance past deficits before my first mandate, of which was mysteriously authorized by the then WFN financial advisers, appointed in 2007, that were entrusted to seek remedial solutions to our cumulative deficits. This transaction took place without a council resolution, consultation to the members and/or approval by the CRA executive committee.

As noted previously, I can generally cope with the accusations and allegations made by members of my own community for the reason already stated. However, the type of criticism to which I have been subjected as a result of the publication of the article in your magazine is obviously an entirely different matter inasmuch as the criticisms extend far beyond the confines of our small isolated community. Under these circumstance I can only speculate as to why the journalist chose to cast aspersions against WFN council and to impugn my integrity in the process of doing so. Moreover, it is my belief that your editorial staff should have at least had the decency to verify the information contained in the article before proceeding with its publication.

Although this is only speculation on my part I must say the journalist left me with the impression that he was hoping his article would precipitate some further action by AANDC by way of a more stringent form of default management. If this was indeed one of his objectives, I would be remiss not to acknowledge that our community is already under a limited version of this process inasmuch as the CNG had recently found it necessary to assume some responsibility for the management of specific funds relating to some construction projects. It would be untruthful for me to say that this action was not warranted. The WFN

council clearly did make some expenditures which, although deemed by council to be totally necessary for the good of the community, were nevertheless beyond budgetary limitations. While we didn't like to see some of responsibilities eroded in this fashion we could acknowledge that we most probably were the authors of our own misfortune and could, at least, derive some satisfaction from the fact that the responsibility remained within the ambit of Cree control.

In certain instances when AANDC is assessing the level of default management required to address serious deficits it has opted to proceed with so called "Third-Party Funding Agreements". In essence, the contracted third party administers, AAND's funding for the delivery of programs and services and works to remedy the underlying causes of the default with very little or no involvement of the community itself. While there is no disputing that many First Nations communities are wrestling with the intricacies of financial management on an on-going basis, it must be recognized that the insertion of third-party funding agreements can deprive FN communities with the much needed opportunity to engage in activities conducive to becoming self-sustaining and self-sufficient. I sincerely hope *the Nation* is not attempting to achieve this sort of outcome but your decision to allow the publication of the article without having conducted a more rigorous analysis of its factual basis does cause me a great deal of concern.

Moving forward, I believe we are taking the right steps and looking ahead. Just last year, we posted 6 new positions that are now filled despite being held off during our initial recovery phase. This fiscal year, we will be posting 10 more vital new positions and up to 6 part time jobs for high school students and 4 team part time jobs for youth 18 years and older, that will animate the sports complex programs and projects this fall. Funds have also been secured to train our own employees and community members in specialized fields.

Positives that should have been duly noted in the article:

- Whale-Mart is a community store; currently employs 7 full-time and 2 part-time members
- A community gas station is scheduled to initiate construction this fall
- Minheku Construction is owned and operated by the community. This season, training and employment opportunities in the construction field have never been this enormous for our people. Minheku has secured contracts that will make a sound impact.
- CTA (local), recognizing the fact that being out on the land pursuing traditional activities, despite their ongoing deficits, a substantial amount of funding has been appropriated to fund their programs and services for the past 5 years.
- Created a special Elder subsidy program, to ensure our Elders that reach their golden years, continue to have access to their trap lines and live the life they have always had, WFN ensures they travel once in the spring and once in the fall at no cost. Now they are not left behind and always have a place to feel welcomed to. This is well appreciated by all the Elders.
- more businesses are up and running than they were in the past because we support serious and legitimate entrepreneurs;
    - -Leslie's Bakery and Cafe
    - -Popeye's Restaurant
    - -Susan's canteen
    - -Jones & Kids Services
    - -Jarrison's Hunting and Ammo (Masty's Variety relaunching)
    - -Annette/Rachel's Arts and Crafts (Fall 2015)
    - -SIDCO Heavy Machinery
    - -Whapmawku Paintball (launching in August 2015)
    - -Wahstuuskuun Bed and Breakfast (2016)
    - -Nahdowkoobaow Outfitting & Excursions (2016)
- WFN aims to have a $2.4 million surplus to continue offsetting the community's deficit for this fiscal year.

By the end of 2016 fiscal year; WFN will have renovated up to 70 units and spent close to $2.8 million since 2009 on renovations. These are units that had a lot of deficiencies because they were not built right from the beginning or were due for a major renovation, mold outbreaks and dust deterioration. These units are WFN's first 10 years of housing projects.

I must specify that at the end of 2014 in our fiscal year, I am still below the deficit that I inherited. Within two years, WFN will no longer be in a financial situation. Our staff and community members have to come together for a common goal, only together in unity, we will rid ourselves with our past financial woes. We have a lot of potential and opportunities that are just on the horizon. I am just a chief and can't oversee all the departments and WFN projects. The administration has to communicate effectively and work in harmony to ensure that all projects/programs are within budget. The foolishness of lies that turn families, friends and coworkers against each other has to end.

Fact: we are 10 years behind from the other 8 Cree communities in our region but does not mean we can't excel with our own economy and community development.

Why was Whapmagoostui the main focus of your article when at least 4 other communities are in the same or similar situation?

Chief Stanley George
Whapmagoostui First Nation

On the road

by Xavier Kataquapit

UNDER THE NORTHERN SKY

I recall as a teenager being eager to head south from my home in Attawapiskat to visit cities that were hosting summer events. It was so thrilling for me to go on a road trip with family or friends and take in all the sites and sounds of summer in the south. For much of my early life I rarely ventured out of my First Nation, but in my teen years there were more opportunities.

Before I began to fly south for school in North Bay and Timmins as a teen all I ever experienced were trips from Attawapiskat to Moosonee by truck on the old winter road. Some of the time we would head out on that treacherous ice road to Fort Albany or Kashechewan to visit family and friends. As a teen the whole world seemed to open up to me with my first flights south to Timmins and North Bay.

Summer road trips were the next big deal. We would either hitch a ride with someone renting a vehicle or take a bus to southern cities. Back in those old days of the 1990s hardly anybody from up the coast had a driver's licence or the opportunity to rent vehicles for road trips outside our First Nation. At home, we drove our vehicles – mostly trucks, four wheelers and tractors – without many rules. It was rare in those days to be able to visit much of Ontario, the rest of Canada or the United States.

I can remember my first opportunity to get a driver's license. I was 16 and it was during that mad rush in the early 1990s when driver-licensing rules were changing. The old rules were that you only needed to have one major drivers test and you could get your license right away. The new rules set up a system of graduated licensing over a period of years and multiple testing. My friends and relatives all rushed to Moosonee to get our licenses.

None of us had ever driven a modern city street before. We had no idea of the many rules and regulations. Yet we thought of ourselves as great drivers. I could speed race my cousins backwards and win. We could steer an old, rusted half-ton truck through the deepest snowdrifts, blinding storms and melting winter roads in the spring. I could navigate the many potholes in my community and I knew every dip and depression on the gravel roads. I rode a four-wheeler on my free time. I drove a tractor during my work hours. We learned by trial and error.

But nothing prepared me for the driver's test in Moosonee that winter. I read through the testing handbook and memorized as much as I could. I had an easy time with the written test, but when I finally got into my brother-in-law Brian's truck to get tested, I failed miserably. I nervously exited my parking spot and gently bumped against the truck in front of me. I slowed down but didn't stop completely at stop signs. I didn't signal at half my turns. When I finally parked at the end, the instructor told me I had automatically failed as soon as I hit the parked truck.

I went home that winter along with a host of other teenagers who had failed to get their licenses. Several people had passed but they were mostly the adults including my brother-in-law who had gone through testing a few times.

It wasn't until four years later when I travelled south to Toronto to visit a friend that I got my first license. My first license was also not with a car but for a motorcycle. I had just purchased an older 1981 Yamaha 650 Maxim, a nimble bike with plenty of power and reliability. I had always wished to drive a car down a major highway but it was also my secret wish to ride a bike. When I got tested this time I was more prepared and I took weeks to learn how to ride properly. It was the best training I ever had as a motorcycle rider has more to lose than someone enclosed in a metal box with four wheels and a ton of steel protecting them. I became more watchful, more mindful and more careful with my driving.

The biggest obstacle I had to overcome was in judging speed and distances. On a short gravel road I always thought 50 kilometres an hour was fast but on a paved four-lane highway, speeds are much greater and that was a little scary. It took me a while to figure out how much room I needed to slow down for exits. Many times my friend and instructor had to be very vocal to let me know I had to slow down.

These days many of my family and friends from up the coast have driver's licences and they own or rent vehicles for major road trips that take them all over the continent. That has all developed in just a couple of decades. We are no longer so landlocked and with the talk of either a train track or road connecting First Nations up the coast to southern cities like Timmins the future looks good for travel.

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HOWIE MILLER

Howie Miller has been featured on both Canadian and American television as a stand-up comedian and actor. In the Spring of 2009 he appeared on the Showtime special "No Reservations Needed". His numerous Canadian television appearances include the CBC comedy specials, "Winnipeg Comedy Festival: Welcome to Turtle Island 1 & 2", "Halifax Comedy Festival"," The Alberta Comedy Spectacular" and in his own half-hour comedy special "Comedy Now Presents Howie Miller." He is also a regular on CBC's popular radio show "The Debaters."

Howie is an accomplished comedic actor and writer and has been nominated for a Gemini Award, a Canadian Comedy Award and a Canadian Screen Award for the sketch comedy show "Caution: May Contain Nuts" which aired on APTN.

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